

# Protect yourself with these lodging reservation guidelines

The lodging industry is becoming more strict with its reservation rules. And you may encounter the following problems, especially in large tourist areas:

- Having to forfeit your deposit upon canceling a reservation.
- Being billed for a room even though you did not use it.
- Minimum stay requirements.

Other problems consumers are having:

- Not receiving the services or amenities that were advertised or represented.
- Being billed at higher room rates than the “special rate” advertised or quoted.

Consumer complaints are often the result of lack of disclosure or miscommunication

between the business and the consumer. Policies vary. So when you call to reserve your room, ask questions and request all your reservation information in writing.

Remember: If a lodge holds a room for you and you do not cancel in advance, you will likely be charged a fee.

Lodges that reserve by the week may impose higher cancellation or no-show fees. By canceling well in advance, the traveler will avoid fees and keep the lodge from losing business.

## Payment

Prior to giving out your credit card number, **ask about the cancellation policy and request a written copy be mailed to you.** Make sure you understand whether the room will be held or guaranteed with your credit card number.

If you cancel the room reservation, be sure to ask for a cancellation number and the name of the person who gave it to you.

## Confirmation

Once you have made your reservation, many motels will assign a confirmation number or will follow up with a confirmation letter. If this is not automatically done, ask the reservation clerk for a confirmation number and for a mailed card confirming your room, rate, length of stay and the special amenities (fireplace, whirlpool, non-smoking). Even if you are given a verbal confirmation number, you should also get it in writing. If you don't receive any type of confirmation, be sure to call the motel and reconfirm your reservation. (If the reservation is made just a few days in

advance, a mailed confirmation may not be available.)

## **Room Rates**

Confirm the current room rate at the time you make the reservation to avoid potential misunderstandings at check-in/check-out. Ask for written confirmation verifying the rate once you make your reservation.

## **Coupons/Special Offers/Gift Certificates**

When reserving a room using a coupon, special offer, gift certificate or membership discount, be sure you tell the reservation clerk. Read the coupon, special offer, gift certificate or membership discount offer carefully for any special conditions or limitations on its use and application.

## **Credit or Charge Card Blocking**

You should be aware of the newest practice in making a reservation—credit or charge card “blocking.” “Blocking” is not a practice initiated by the lodging industry but is the only way charge card companies will ensure payment at check-out. The clerk contacts your credit card company to give an estimated total. If the transaction is approved, your available credit is reduced by that estimated amount. That is a “block.” Be aware that if you use a different card or cash to pay your final bill, the company that issued the card you used to check in might hold the block for up to 15 days after you’ve checked out. That’s because it was not notified of the final charge and didn’t know you paid another way. This becomes a problem if you are near your

credit limit. It is not only embarrassing to have your card declined, but if you have an emergency purchase to make you may not have enough available credit. To avoid this, use the same card at departure to pay your bill or be sure to ask the clerk to remove the “block” from the first card you used when you leave.

To check out complaints about hotels and motels, or to file a complaint, contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection at:

**(800) 422-7128**

**FAX: (608) 224-4939**

**TTY: (608) 224-5058**

**E-MAIL:**

**[datcphotline@datcp.state.wi.us](mailto:datcphotline@datcp.state.wi.us)**

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